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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 002111

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MAY 18 MEETING WITH FORMER PRESIDENT
AQUINO

REF: A. MANILA 1275
[1](#)B. 05 MANILA 3946
[1](#)C. 05 MANILA 3154

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by the DCM, paid her first visit on former president Corazon "Cory" Aquino on May [1](#)18. Aquino talked warmly and nostalgically about her days in Malacanang before turning to the current political situation.

She said that she still believes that President Arroyo and Vice President De Castro should step down for the good of the country. (Aquino first called on the President to resign in July 2005, at the height of a scandal over alleged cheating in the 2004 presidential elections - see ref C.) Such a move would put Senate President Franklin Drilon temporarily in charge until snap elections could be held to choose a new president and vice president to serve out the remainder of the term until 2010.

[1](#)2. (C) Initially, Aquino insisted that she had no desire to get involved in politics again, stating she was much more interested in promoting micro-financing and livelihood assistance though a foundation she set up in honor of her late husband, Benigno Aquino, Jr. She asserted that then-Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales and several former Arroyo cabinet officials approached her in mid-2005 and convinced her to go, reluctantly, to the palace to ask Arroyo to step down. She said that Archbishop Rosales was very firm in urging Arroyo to resign, but the President said practically nothing throughout the entire visit, and then abruptly excused herself to attend another meeting. Aquino expressed dismay that Rosales has taken a much softer public stance since then and speculated that his apparent about-face may have been due to pressure from the Papal Nuncio, who wants the bishops to keep a low profile on political issues (see ref B).

[1](#)3. (C) While admitting that President Arroyo has benefited from the Opposition's lack of a clear leader, Aquino pointed out that the anti-Marcos opposition was in the same position after the death of her husband in 1983. She said she believed that if Arroyo were to step aside, a new leader would emerge.

[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador underscored the need to follow the democratic process in any effort to change the government. Aquino insisted that she has no intention to pursue any extra-constitutional actions or sow rebellion. She claimed that more and more average Filipinos support her opposition to the President.

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Kenney